4: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1948 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

593 from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *puthew kwon*, honouring
591 with porridge.

All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they
842 want a son and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union. Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accepting such cattle as bridewealth in case they had suddenly to be returned to the husband.
591 When a child is born the mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it. This is a suitable regulation, because after the bridewealth has been paid the husband's father is likely to be short of lactating cows, while the wife's parents will have plenty of milk from their herd. If, for some reason, the wife goes to live with her husband
862 before the child is weaned, it may not be weaned without the consent of her parents,
602 and I have seen a husband pay several cattle to atone for contravention of this rule.
603 A *ku*, first child, belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and if he is weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them, a boy till he is initiated and
858 a girl till she is betrothed. This is the rule, though there is variation in practice, depending on the ability of the maternal grandparents to support the child and on the relations between them and their son-in-law.

852 Shortly after the birth of her first-born the wife, now called *pai dap*, a nursing
591 mother, brings the baby to her husband's home and lays him in the ashes of the hearth in the centre of his grandfather's byre, a rite known as *nong puka*, the bringing to the
[273] ashes. Beer has been prepared and is drunk by a few senior kinsmen of the husband who live in his hamlet. It is a domestic, and not a public, ceremony. The wife spends a few days in her husband's home and returns with the child to the village of her parents. She has as yet no hut of her own in her husband's homestead.

591 When his first-born has been weaned the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's
585 homestead facing the family kraal. He then goes to ask his parents-in-law for his wife. They do not deny him, even if, as is likely, some of the bridewealth cattle are still owing. They give her a horn spoon and a gourd and she takes these with her to her husband's home. The gift of a spoon is emphasized by the Nuer in speaking of marriage, because it is a recognition that the woman is now, in the full sense, a wife, who will eat of the porridge of her own gardens with the milk of her own herd. She now milks her husband's cows instead of her father's and hoes the gardens of his home and not those of her childhood. Before she is given a spoon, even if she hoes a garden at her husband's home she takes the harvest back to her father, or she may live at her husband's home and cultivate in her father's village, if it is not far. It is only when a man's bride has borne him a child and tends his hearth that she becomes, in the Nuer sense, his wife. She then makes a *buor*, a mud fire-screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.

The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the
[606] bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child of their lineage.

cattle has been handed over.(1) A marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union. 584

The first step occurs when a youth reaches an understanding with a girl and, having some of the necessary cattle, asks her consent to marriage. Both families are consulted and arrangements are made for the betrothal *(larcieng)*.

When a definite agreement has been reached about bridewealth cattle, the wedding ceremony *(ngut)* is held at the bride's homestead. The main features of a wedding are: discussions about cattle, which are held in the morning; the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth, followed by the wedding dance and the wedding sacrifice in the afternoon and evening. Though this ceremony does not conclude the marriage there is every chance, once this point is reached, that the union will be completed. 585

The third of the public ceremonies is the one which, at least among the Eastern Nuer, makes the union legally binding. This is the *mut* (consummation). After it the husband can claim compensation for adultery and the cattle are regarded as marriage cattle and not as a pledge.

Marriage is completed by the birth of a child. Until then the wife sleeps in a hut at her parents' homestead and she remains with her parents until the child is weaned. The first-born child belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and even if he is weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them. A boy stays with his maternal grandparents until he is initiated, a girl until she is betrothed. The baby is always brought to the father's home for the ceremony of laying him on the ashes of the hearth in the centre of his grandfather's byre, which takes place shortly after birth. 591 603 852

After the weaning, the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead. She goes to live with him as a true wife in that she will now milk his cows and hoe his gardens and not those of her father. She makes a *buor*, a mud fire screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.(2) 591

In-Law Relationships

In-law relationships are marked by certain avoidances and displays of respect. Until his first child is born a husband does not openly visit his parents-in-law's village except in some formal capacity. After the birth he makes public visits, but he treats his parents-in-law with great respect and must not eat with them or appear naked before them. When two or three children have been born, a ceremony takes place after which he no longer has to observe these rules and prohibitions. When the father-in-law visits the husband's home and is entertained and given a bull, calf or sheep, his son-in-law may regard him as a father. The only in-law whom a man need not treat with formal respect is his wife's sister. 606 607

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.29.
(2) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.40.